

SECRET SATELLITES

A French space surveillance radar has detected 20 to 30 satellites in low Earth orbit that do *not* figure in the US Defense Department's catalogue.

After 16 months of operation of its Graves radar system, which can locate satellites in orbits up to 1,000 kilometres in altitude, the French Defence Ministry says it has gathered just about enough information to pressure US authorities to stop publishing the whereabouts of French reconnaissance and military communications satellites.

The US Defense Department's Space Surveillance Network is the world's gold standard for cataloguing satellites and debris in both low Earth orbit and the higher geostationary orbit at 36,000 kilometres in altitude, where telecommunications satellites operate.

Data from the US network of ground-based sensors are regularly published and used worldwide by those tracking satellite and space debris trajectories. The published information excludes sensitive US defence satellites, but regularly includes data on the orbits of other nations' military hardware.

The Graves radar, and a complementary system operated by the German government, together are enough to pinpoint the location, size, orbit and transmission frequency of satellites—data



which the US would prefer not be broadcast worldwide, French officials said.

"We have discussed the Graves results with our American colleagues and highlighted the discrepancies between what we have found and what is published by the US Space Surveillance Network," said one French defence official. "They told us, 'If we have not published it in our catalogue, then it does not exist.' So I guess we have been tracking objects that do not exist. I can tell you that some of these non-existent objects have solar arrays."

(Source: *Space.com*, 8 June 2007, http://www.space.com/news/060707_graves_web.html)

EM PULSE TECHNOLOGY

A group of Russian scientists has developed a series of unique compact generators capable of producing high-energy pulses of hundreds and even thousands of megawatts.

The new generators are sources of electromagnetic radiation rather than electricity. Their main feature is a capacity to produce enormous power in a matter of nanoseconds. These impulses can be generated with a very high frequency.

Reporting these results to the RAS Presidium, scientists emphasised that sources with super-radiation effects can be broadly used in long-range, high-resolution, impulse-based radio location and in studies of non-thermal impact of powerful electromagnetic fields on radio electronic components and different biological species.

Super-powerful pulse generators can test the reliability of radio electronic devices and the immunity of energy facilities to different impacts. They can imitate the interference caused by lightning and even by a nuclear blast. Their tiny size and unique physical properties make their sphere of application extremely wide.

The electromagnetic pulse (EMP) is a product of a nuclear explosion. It puts out of action even those electronic control systems that have withstood the shockwave and reduces expensive smart weapons to scrap metal. A short, intensive pulse can instantly paralyse databases, financial centres and industrial equipment.

(Source: *Novosti*, 11 May 2007, <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20070511/65348455.html>)

PLANTS RECOGNISE THEIR SIBLINGS

Researchers at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, have found that plants get fiercely competitive when they're forced to share their pot with strangers of the same species, but they're accommodating when potted with their siblings.

"The ability to recognise and favour kin is common in animals, but this is the first time it has been shown in plants," said Susan Dudley, associate professor of biology at McMaster University. "When



plants share their pots, they get competitive and start growing more roots, which allows them to grab water and mineral nutrients before their neighbours get them. It appears, though, that they only do this when sharing a pot with unrelated plants; when they share a pot with family, they don't increase their root growth. Because differences between groups of strangers and groups of siblings only occurred when they shared a pot, the root interactions may provide a cue for kin recognition.

"Gardeners have known for a long time that some pairs of species get along better than others, and scientists are starting to catch up with why that happens," says Dudley. "What I've found is that plants from the same mother may be more compatible with each other than with plants of the same species that had different mothers. The more we know about plants, the more complex their interactions seem to be, so it may be as hard to predict the outcome as when you mix different people at a party."

(Source: *PhysOrg.com*, 13 June 2007, <http://physorg.com/news100963920.html>)

SHOCK OVER GUANTANAMO DETAINEES REPORT

A little-known report released in February 2006 reveals that the majority of prisoners at Guantánamo were not accused of hostile acts and, shockingly, that 95 per cent were seized by local bounty hunters and sold to US forces for US\$5,000 per claimed Taliban fighter and \$25,000 for each supposed Al-Qaeda member. In addition, at least 20 detainees were children, some as young as thirteen.

The report is the first effort to provide a more detailed picture of the Guantánamo detainees and how they ended up there, and the purported basis for their enemy combatant designation. It is based almost entirely upon the US government's own documents. Among the findings:

1. Fifty-five per cent of the detainees were determined as not having committed any hostile acts against the United States or its coalition allies.

2. Only eight per cent of the detainees were characterised as Al-Qaeda fighters. Of the remaining detainees, 40 per cent were determined as having no definitive connection with Al-Qaeda at all and 18 per cent as having no definitive affiliation with either Al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

3. The US has detained numerous

persons based on mere affiliations with a large number of groups that, in fact, are not on the Department of Homeland Security's terrorist watchlist. Moreover, the connection between such detainees and such organisations varies considerably. Eight per cent were detained because they were deemed "fighters for", 30 per cent were considered "members of", a large majority—60 per cent—were detained merely because they were "associated with" a group or groups which the government asserts are terrorist organisations. For two per cent of the prisoners, a link to any terrorist group was not identified.

4. Only five per cent of the detainees were captured by United States forces. Eighty-six per cent of the detainees were arrested by either Pakistan or the Northern Alliance and turned over to United States custody. They were handed over during a time when the US was offering large bounties for the capture of suspected enemies.

5. Finally, the population of persons deemed not to be enemy combatants—mostly Uighurs—are in fact accused of more serious allegations than a great many persons still deemed to be enemy combatants.

(Source: "Report on Guantánamo Detainees: A Profile of 517 Detainees through Analysis of Department of Defense Data" by Mark Denbeaux and Joshua W. Denbeaux, *Seton Hall University, School of Law, Seton Hall Public Law Research Paper No. 46, February 2006*, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=885659)

IS YOUR CAR SPYING ON YOU?

Since 2000, most domestic automobile manufacturers, namely General Motors (GM) and Ford, have been quietly installing what are technically called Motor Vehicle Event Data Recorders (MVEDRs). These are devices based on IEEE standards formally adopted in 2002.

The MVEDRs are wired to the car's electronic sensing devices and constantly receive input from various features in modern cars.

Unlike the aeroplane versions, black boxes in cars do not record conversations inside the car, and retain data from only five seconds before a crash until a few seconds after, triggered by an increase in g-forces on the vehicle. The data are retained for as long as 45 days after an event. Until now, what MVEDRs capture—and even when they retain it—has been left up to the manufacturers.

Now, GM has already found novel ways to integrate its MVEDR collection into other aspects of the company, such as OnStar—a roadside service package available in all GM cars.

In 2004, while testing a 2005 Chevy Malibu Maxx, the editors at *AutoWeek* reported that, after taking the SUV around a particularly gnarly set of cones, the OnStar button lit up and the speaker system offered a helpful voice to ask if everything was alright. No one in the car had reported a problem. Rather, the vehicle's MVEDR system had kicked in because of the increase in g-force data. *AutoWeek* reported that OnStar collects



data on near-collisions and collisions and retains this data for as long as 18 months.

In California, aides to Governor Schwarzenegger have floated an idea in which these same MVEDRs could be enlisted to record mileage so that those who drive greater distances pay an additional mileage tax.

In Oregon, a similar proposal calls for MVEDRs to include GPS transponders in order to tax cars driving within the state boundaries.

On the commercial side, at least one auto insurance company has considered using MVEDR data to offer discounts to "safe drivers".

(Source: Robert Vamosi, CNET Reviews, 4 May 2007, http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-3513_7-6731442-1.html)

CALL FOR CONTROLS ON SYNTHETIC LIFE

An international scientific congress, Synthetic Biology 3.0, met in Zurich, Switzerland, on 24–27 June to discuss the latest advances in synthetic biology—the new field of extreme genetic engineering that attempts to build synthetic life-forms.

Synthetic biologists contend that all the parts of life can be made synthetically (that is, by chemistry) and then engineered in the laboratory to produce "living machines"—fully working organisms programmed for particular tasks. Some are being designed for intentional environmental release.

Today there are about a dozen synthetic biology companies worldwide, plus almost 70 commercial "gene foundries" that manufacture designer DNA molecules for

industrial use. The first commercial products using synthetic biology (e.g., a textile fibre by DuPont) are about to enter the market and there are concerns that dangerous pathogens, such as smallpox or Ebola virus, could now be constructed as bioweapons.

Because synthetic biology goes far beyond the genetic engineering techniques previously used to develop genetically modified food and drugs, no laws have yet been developed that address its safety, security and social risks.

"Once more, a new technology is storming ahead with no government or international body able to regulate or control it," says biologist Florianne Koechlin from SAG (the Swiss Working Group on Gene Technology). "Once more, we hear from the scientific community, supported by industry and the military, that they have life under control and will soon be able to construct it. But life is more than the sum of its parts."

Koechlin is a member of the Swiss government-appointed ethics body that will investigate the implications of synthetic biology later this year.

Already, US patent application no. 20070122826, entitled "Minimal bacterial genome", claims monopoly ownership of a "free-living organism that can grow and replicate", whose genome (full genetic information) has been built entirely through mechanical means.

Craig Venter, whose scientific institute filed the patent application, has since told *Business Week* that his team is only weeks or months away from building such a

synthetic organism, dubbed *Mycoplasma laboratorium*. If they succeed, it will mark a break with evolution as we know it.

(Source: ETC news release, 25 June 2007, <http://www.etcgroup.org>)

CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF US INTELLIGENCE WORK

The US government now outsources a vast portion of its spying operations to private firms—and with zero public accountability.

More than five years into the global "war on terror", spying has become one of the fastest growing private industries in the United States. The federal government relies more than ever on outsourcing for some of its most sensitive work, though it has kept details about its use of private contractors a closely guarded secret. Intelligence experts have warned—as has the government itself—of a critical lack of oversight for the booming intelligence business.

On 14 May at an industry conference in Colorado sponsored by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the US government revealed for the first time that 70 per cent of its classified intelligence budget is spent on private contracts.

Because nearly 90 per cent of intelligence contracts are classified and the budgets kept secret, it's difficult to draw up a list of top contractors and their revenues derived from intelligence work.

Based on publicly available information, including filings from publicly traded companies with the Securities and Exchange Commission and company press releases and websites, the current top five intelligence contractors appear to be Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, SAIC, General Dynamics and L-3 Communications.

Other major contractors include Booz Allen Hamilton, CACI International, DRS Technologies and ManTech International.

The industry's growth and dependence on government budgets has made intelligence contracting an attractive market for former high-ranking national security officials, like former CIA director George Tenet who now earns millions of dollars working as a director and adviser to four companies that hold contracts with US intelligence agencies and do big business in Iraq and elsewhere.

(Source: Tim Shorrock, *Global Research*, 3 June 2007, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=5868>)



FAMILY FARMERS FIGHT BACK

Small farmers—and the consumers who support them—celebrated the fourth of July with the launch of the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund. The non-profit organisation was founded to protect the rights of farmers to provide meat, eggs, raw dairy products, vegetables and other foods directly to consumers.

The opening celebration was attended by over 500 farmers and consumers who believe in the constitutional right to obtain raw milk and other foods directly from family farms without interference by federal, state and local governments.

"Farmers across the land are either being forced into producing factory-quality industrial food and selling it through corporate channels or just closing down the farm," says Minneapolis activist Will Winter, DVM. "Some who've tried to do it the old-fashioned way have found themselves faced with huge fines and even jail time."

(Source: Press release, 4 July 2007, from Kaayla T. Daniel, PhD, Media Liaison, Farm-To-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, email wholenutritionist@earthlink.net)

US GETS MILITARY BASE IN WA

After three years of secret negotiations with Australia, the United States is to build a new military communications base at Geraldton in Western Australia. The base is to provide an important link for a new network of secret US military satellites, and is the first big US military installation to be built in Australia since the controversy surrounding the joint spy base at Pine Gap more than two decades ago.

Philip Dorling, visiting fellow at the Australian Defence Force Academy, said that once the base was operating it would be almost impossible for Australia to be fully neutral or stand back from any war in which the US was involved.

Details of the deal emerged on the same day as the US finally told Australia it would not allow even its key allies, including Australia, to buy its best fighter aircraft, the F-22 Raptor.

Defence minister Brendan Nelson confirmed that talks were continuing with the US Defence Department which wants to build more ground stations for its Mobile User Objective System (MUOS), an array of satellites being developed to provide new-generation communications for US and allied forces.

(Source: The Age, 15 February 2007)

IRAQI COLLABORATOR EXPOSES AMERICAN DEATH SQUADS

The Association of Muslim Scholars of Iraq (AMSI) reports that a former Iraqi collaborator has disclosed some of the US activities such as assassinations and bombings in markets that aim at sparking sectarian fighting among Iraqis so as to facilitate the partition of the country. AMSI reported the source as saying that he worked with the US occupation troops for about two-and-a-half years and then was able to flee from them to an area outside Baghdad.

The former collaborator, who asked not to be identified, recalled: "I was a soldier in the Iraqi Army in the war of 1991, and during the withdrawal from Kuwait I decided to seek asylum in Saudi Arabia along with dozens of others like me. That was how I was recruited into the American forces, for there were US military committees that chose a number of Iraqis who were willing to volunteer to join them and be transported to America. I was one of those," he said.

The former collaborator went on: "In 1992 I was taken to America, specifically to an island where most of the establishments were military. I was with a number of other Iraqis, one of them the former governor of an-Najaf, 'Adnan adh-Dharfi. We received military training and intense courses in English and in how to carry out tasks like assassination," he recounted.

The former collaborator said that during the 2003 invasion and subsequent war, he was transported back to the interior of Iraq to carry out specific tasks assigned to him by the US agencies.

"During the last war that led to the occupation of Iraq, I was with a group of comrades who had received training in America on how to spread chaos in the ranks of the Iraqi Army. The unit that I was with settled in the presidential palace in the al-A'zamiyah district. My job was being a guard, but after a time that situation changed and the American occupation forces put me in charge of a group of a unit that carried out assassinations in the streets of Baghdad," he said.

"Our task was to carry out assassinations of individuals. The US occupation army would supply us with their names, pictures and maps of their daily movements to and from their place of residence and we were supposed to kill the Shi'i, for example in [the Sunni district of] al-A'zamiyah, and kill the Sunni in [the Shi'i district of] Madinat as-Sadr, and so on. Anyone in the unit who made a mistake was killed. Three members of my team were killed by US occupation forces after they failed to assassinate Sunni political figures in Baghdad. A US force that had been so-ordered eliminated them. That took place two years ago."

The former collaborator said that the Americans have a unit for "dirty jobs". That unit is a mix of Iraqis, Americans and foreigners and of the security detachments that are deployed in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities. This unit doesn't only carry out assassinations, but some of its members specialise in planting bombs and car bombs in neighbourhoods and markets. This unit carries out operations in which wanted people whom the American Army does not want killed are arrested.

The former collaborator said that "...operations of planting car bombs and blowing up explosives in markets are carried out in various ways; the best-known and most famous among the US troops is placing a bomb inside cars as they are being searched at checkpoints. Another way is to put bombs in the cars during interrogations. After the desired person is summoned to one of the US bases, a bomb is placed in his car and he is asked to drive to a police station or a market for some purpose and there his car blows up."

AMSI noted that the testimony of the former collaborator is consistent with some Western reports that have disclosed the involvement of US military personnel in bombings that target Iraqi civilians. The British reporter Robert Fisk, AMSI noted, had recently met with Iraqis in Syria concerning such "black operations" carried out by the Americans.

The Egyptian writer and former editor of *Al-Ahram*, Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, also noted in an interview with *Al-Jazeera* satellite TV that there are mercenaries who practically make up an army second only to the regular US Army in Iraq in terms of their numbers and equipment. This force is now called the "Knights of Malta", Haykal said, and they are the cause of many of the attacks that target Iraqi civilians. Haykal noted that there are Iraqis and Lebanese working in the ranks of that force.

(Source: Uruknet.info, 9 May 2007, <http://uruknet.info/?p=m32781&s1=h1>)